

GA Subject Knowledge Scholar Programme

Becky Kitchen, the GA's Head of Professional Development, looks back on the first year of the Subject Knowledge Scholar Programme.



Becky Kitchen

The first cohort of GA Subject Knowledge Scholars (SKS) have just graduated from the programme; the majority are about to embark on their Initial Teacher Education, having not previously studied geography. For this impact interview, we wanted to ask them about their experiences and how they think it will prepare them for their future career.

'As a forty-something career-changer, the SKS programme has been invaluable in building my geography subject knowledge from the ground up. The focused eight-week online course and expert guidance have equipped me with a solid understanding of core geographical concepts, giving me the confidence to teach effectively and inspire students. I've particularly enjoyed the community, the access to real expertise and the support from Becky and the team. But also, I'd forgotten how much I enjoyed learning. The SKS programme has rekindled my curiosity about the world around me and reminded me of how awe-inspiring it can be!' David

'The SKS programme has provided a vital subject-knowledge refresher before teacher training. It revealed greater nuance in "familiar" topics, smaller gaps than anticipated in forgotten areas, and has given me confidence to engage effectively from day one.' Elliot

'Being on the course has really helped to develop my subject knowledge and has provided many resources to use, both in and out of the classroom. I've particularly enjoyed the opportunity to ask questions about misconceptions. I am excited to continue teaching geography with a deeper and richer understanding of the subject.' Eloise

'At the age of 55, I am finally fulfilling a long-held desire to teach geography. My geography degree was a long time ago, so I decided to do the programme to refresh my memory. It has also brought me up to speed with developments in the last 30 years! I also wanted to know what is taught at secondary school. The course has helped me with all of this. The eight-week course has been fantastic, but a big highlight was the invite to the GA Conference. What a way to start my career in teaching! Such energy and enthusiasm for the subject. During the three days I was also able to meet a number of my fellow students. We've become friends and are already helping each other through the transition. I've been able to spend two days a week over the last five weeks volunteering in my PGCE school while doing the course. The mix has been a fantastic experience. I am under no illusion how hard the next 12 months are going to be, but having already had to explain six-figure grid references and climate graphs, it's working with the students that I'm looking forward to the most.' Nigel

'The SKS programme has allowed me to work at my own pace, meaning I can really concentrate on the topics that I find more challenging. The content within each topic has been invaluable. There are links and references to resources and additional readings, which I can refer back to as I start my teaching journey and I'm really looking forward to putting what I've learned on the SKS programme into practice.' Natalie

'As someone who is switching into geography from a completely different discipline, the structure of the SKS programme has allowed me to comprehensively work my way through the different key geography topics. I have found it really accessible, and enjoyed being able to dip in and out of the workbook when I could. The SKS programme is really flexible, and I have managed to complete this alongside my job and having a toddler. The weekly webinars have been invaluable, building a community and working through common questions and misconceptions with other scholars, all guided by one of geography's leading developers. That one hour a week to come together and iron out any questions that week's specific topic has raised has been vital in keeping me engaged and enthused. Becky has such a wealth of knowledge and delivers these webinars with such ease that I am excited to join the call each week. I am really looking forward to being able to inspire the next generation of geographers. I want to do what my teachers did for me and light a fire of questioning about the world that doesn't stop. Geography is happening all around us, and I can't wait to open up the world to my students.' Abby

We are now recruiting our 2026 Subject Knowledge Scholars!

We'll be running the programme for those who are about to embark on their training, those who have just completed their training, and practicing teachers. If you are interested in finding out more, search GA Subject Knowledge Scholar Programme - Geographical Association or go to <https://the-ga.org/3JiX1Sx>.

We'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate our 2025 scholars for passing the programme:

Oana Plostinaru	Anastasia Harrington
Natalie Harkus-Jeffries	Sham Kyriakakis
Caius-Gabriel Filimon	Maggie Connor
Abby Harrison	Abigail Thompson
Joshua Parton	Carina Friesen
Nigel Partington	Megan Shirley
Paul Thompson	Emily Payne
Elliot Worth	Luke Evans
Kelly Lianne Bruney	Rachel Ollerenshaw
Thomas Pugh	Dan Shillcock
Connor Willis-Humbles	Eloise Bennigsen
Jeremy Small	David Spon-Smith
James Reed	Katherine Pango
Sadie Jones	Muna Hassan
Mika Anderson	Seyi Rhodes
Emma Hatfield	Robert Casey
Henry Sodzi-Smith	Adam Torok
Sarah Smith	